



Alumni Weekend Checklist:

- ✓ Picnic
- ✓ Parade
- ✓ Panel Discussions

There was more to do on Alumni Weekend 2011 than catch up with old friends and classmates, march in the parade and grab lunch under the tents, and try to square the campus you remember with the (mostly much nicer) surroundings before your eyes. Penn Alumni and the University's schools and centers offered up dozens of educational tours, talks, and seminars on subjects ranging from food safety to the University's architectural treasures to minimally invasive surgery for pets. Here are reports from just a few.

Heading for a Healthier World

In the early 2000s, as the country turned its attention to the global stage, Raymond and Ruth Perelman School of Medicine Dean Arthur Rubenstein realized that his school needed to do the same.

It started with the students. They'd formed their own global health interest group at Penn, and prospective students were exhibiting a similar preoccupation with international issues. "In the interview process, many of them said, 'We'd like to come, Penn's a great place, but we would like to be trained and have the experience and opportunity of working in countries all over the world because it's a passion of ours—we're really committed to it,'" Rubenstein said. "We became aware that if we did not have a serious global health program, students would choose not to come to our schools. It was that clear ... If we were going to attract the best students, we really had to build such a program."

And build it they did. Penn's Global Health Program has been going strong since 2004, and was frequently cited in the Alumni Weekend panel on "Global Health in a Connected World." Inside the recently renovated Claire M. Fagin Hall, Rubenstein

joined two other panelists—Afaf Meleis, the Margaret Bond Simon Dean of Penn Nursing, and Neal Nathanson, associate dean for Global Health Programs—as they explained Penn's program and grappled with one of the biggest questions surrounding global health today: Why should we be so concerned with health issues in other countries when we have plenty of our own to deal with here?

In her introduction to the event, President Amy Gutmann offered an explanation: "Making life-saving healthcare available to hundreds of millions of people who desperately need it may be the single most pressing problem of our inter-connected world," she said. When it comes to global health, among other issues, "the world is nowhere near

declaring 'mission accomplished.'"

Meleis said dealing with international health problems is "a moral commitment to the world" and can be "a very humbling experience" for the faculty and students who travel overseas to help. "They are inspired when they go somewhere else," she added. "Being in other countries and really learning about what's going on there is definitely a win-win for us: We have better-educated healthcare professionals who are more sensitive to vulnerable populations."

Global health systems are grappling with a host of serious problems right now—HIV/AIDS, violence, poverty, lack of access to health services and education, maternal and infant death—and in nearly all cases, they're more severely affecting women, Meleis said. "I believe the most important issue that any of us ought to see is the gender divide in the world and the disparities it creates," she added. "By focusing on women's health, we can develop [a] sense of social mission, we can develop [a] sense of social accountability, and we can prepare our students to really understand what's going on in the world."





While globalization and urbanization can often mean new opportunities and positive changes in developing countries, Meleis said they are not without a serious cost to women's health. "Women are uniquely burdened by the effects of globalization and they remain disadvantaged in many areas of life, which puts them at risk," she said. "I worry very much that when we focus only on diseases, without looking at who is more marginalized and who is more compromised in the process, we lose sight of the need to focus on women's health."

Rubenstein expressed concern over another major international medical issue—the so-called "brain drain" that occurs when healthcare professionals train in an underdeveloped country but come to the US or Canada or Australia to work. "These countries are putting an enormous amount of money and effort into training [their citizens], and then they're attracted here because of higher pay, better conditions, and because healthcare professionals are highly regarded in this country," he said. "This is a very, very serious problem."

The solution, Rubenstein said, may lie in the Medical Education Partnership Initiative. Introduced in 2010, the government-funded program is investing in healthcare training, an infrastructure reward system, and continuing education opportunities designed to encourage healthcare professionals to stay in underdeveloped countries. "In my view," Rubenstein added, "this is probably the single most exciting initiative in global health."

The idea behind it is a familiar one at Penn. For the last decade, the University has been working with the University of Botswana and the country's government to train healthcare personnel in HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment and to develop strong postgraduate training programs ["Prognosis Botswana," Mar|Apr 2007]. Through the Botswana-UPenn Partnership, several hundred Penn students, residents, and researchers travel to Botswana each year for educational and research opportunities.

It's just one component of Penn's burgeoning Global Health Program. According to Nathanson, the program has been expanding since its launch in 2004, and now offers a global

health track—including international rotations—to interested School of Medicine residents. About 80 to 100 students complete the voluntary international rotations each year, about half in African countries.

The immersion opportunities don't end abroad, though. About a hundred students each year participate in local service and immersion experiences, such as Puentes de Salud's Philadelphia health clinic for Latinos. Nathanson said Penn Medicine also encourages those in the Global Health Program to pursue a master's degree in public health so they can better understand the challenges underserved populations face both here and abroad.

Broadly speaking, global health is "something we really are invested in," Rubenstein added. "Our students have driven it to all of our advantage, and when you read about this in alumni magazines, I hope that you'll be both interested and proud." ♦

—Molly Petrilla C'06

Varied Views on the Economy

The question posed by financial journalist Jean Chatzky C'86 seemed simple at its core. "Where are we," she asked, "in terms of our financial well-being?"

The participants in "From Wall Street to your Wallet" had varying answers.

Binyamin Appelbaum C'01, a *New York Times* reporter and former executive editor of *The Daily Pennsylvanian*, began the discussion by painting a foreboding picture. Appelbaum, who used to work at the *Charlotte Observer*, where he was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in public service for his coverage of the foreclosure crisis, pointed to his former city as proof of a stunning economic decline and a far slower recovery. Charlotte circa 2006, he said, "had more money than they knew what to do with"—so much, in fact, that the city built a manmade river for whitewater rafting. In the wake of the financial crisis, though, that all changed. "One of the [big] banks has completely disappeared. The other is struggling badly. Home prices have fallen dramatically. Unemployment



has shot through the roof. Even though the economy has begun to recover, life there has not returned to anything like normal. People have jobs that pay less than the jobs they had previously, they don't get the same bonuses, they can't buy the same things, and they don't have the same kind of certainty that comes when things are on the upswing."

Karen Finerman W'87, a hedge fund manager and "The Chairwoman" on CNBC's *Fast Money*, offered a less gloomy outlook. "The Wall Street recovery, in so many areas, has been nothing short of astounding if you think about what happened in 2008 as one company after the other, in domino fashion, was going under. The debt market is completely revived. Deals are getting done that would have been unthinkable in 2008 both in numbers and scale. The stock market has also rebounded. There's so much money on company balance sheets and so much money available to borrow. It's extraordinary."

Sigal Barsade, the Joseph Frank Bernstein Professor of Management, described the mood of consumers as "lightly bipolar."

"A lot is about perception," she explained. "People right now are in the middle. They're not in the depths of despair and they're not completely giddy. I think they're cautious."

Barsade, who spends much of her time researching emotional intelligence and emotions in the workplace, also discussed "threat rigidity" as it relates to investors reverting to what they know best when times are tough, as well as the concept of "high-trait negative affectivity vs. low-trait negative affectivity"—how investors are either psychologically prone to panic or remain calm when unforeseen risks like natural disasters and wars affect the market. (Hint: calm is better.)

Views of the economy's health are also affected by "emotional contagion," Barsade added. "When someone may have been marginally worried, they see the TV and it's amplified," she said. "Then what do you do? You don't buy that refrigerator you were going to buy. Then, if you cut back on spending, what have you just done to the economy? So the TV, justifi-



ably, reports that the economy is getting worse—and that of course makes you feel worse. And then you cut back more. You can get into a cycle. And what the media did is amplify it. They have the ability to do that.”

Finerman, who referred to her *Fast Money* show as the one “a lot of you have on mute in your office,” agreed. On most days, in reality there is little change in the economy or the value of companies, “but we need there to be a story,” she said. “Our ratings went through the roof [during the recession]. You could see people being sucked into that.”

While admitting that the financial crisis had benefited his own career as a reporter, Appelbaum shed a more positive light on the news industry’s role. “The better you understand the situation, the less likely you are to react to new developments,” he said. “That’s the good thing the media does—it helps you understand the fundamentals.”

After other economic issues ranging from the debt ceiling to gas prices to inflation to housing were discussed, Chatzky asked each panelist to give advice for those concerned about their own finances. (As Chatzky noted in her opening remarks, even the mostly “successful, affluent, educated, employed” audience they were addressing “worry about money more than any other aspect of their lives—more than jobs, kids, health, marriages, and even more than their weight and appearance.”)

Barsade’s advice: Be self-aware. Understand that the phenomenon of emotional contagion exists and try to avoid doing things your friends or the media tell you to do. Use your emotional intelligence to invest rationally—namely, by trading less and diversifying more. “It’s not sexy advice,” she said, “but studies show people who are better at regulating their emotions tend to stay more solidly in the middle. You won’t get huge returns but you also won’t get huge losses either.”

Finerman, the CEO of Metropolitan Capital Advisors and the mother of two sets of twins, agreed with Barsade that being a smart investor means diversifying—not just among your investments but also among financial managers, asset classes, and even types of currency. “Diversification,” Finerman said, “will serve you well so you can be rational in your decisions.”

Appelbaum, as he did throughout the session, reminded those in attendance just how badly broken things had become and noted that even some of the most sophisticated investors got battered during the recession. His advice? Lower your expectations, which may mean not getting that mortgage you can only barely afford. “There’s an increment of wealth that is never coming back. That part of the economy is gone,” Appelbaum said. “If you’re thinking about the future, I guess adjusting expectations is the thing to do. It’s not the most pleasant message. But we lost something that we’re not getting back.”

Chatzky, who’s authored seven books and is the financial editor for *The Today Show*, chimed in with her own answer, reminding people to save money. And research shows that the best way to save is by doing it automatically through retirement funds. “Whatever you can do,” Chatzky said, “whatever mind games you can do to psyche yourself into saving more money, they’re all really, really important things.” ♦ —Dave Zeitlin C’03

“Something That Is Always Fascinating”

One panel at Alumni Weekend featured a set of alumni with a collective résumé you might not expect in a venue usually heavy on expertise in politics, science, and the economy: *Survivor*, *Flavor of Love*, *Don’t Forget the Lyrics*, *Shaq’s Big Challenge*, and *Project Runway*. Moderated by Katherine Sender, associate professor and associate dean of graduate studies at the Annenberg School for Communication, “Getting Real: From Campus to Camera” included alumni who have both worked behind and in front of the camera, with producers Mark Cronin ENG ’86 and Greg Goldman C’96, and former contestants Charlie Herschel C’01 and Kristin Haskin Simms C’93.

Cronin claimed, only half-jokingly, that he double-majored at Penn, in “chemical engineering, and Mask and Wig.” The competition for his time grew so intense, he said, that at one point “I ended up on academic probation, because I was dressing up as a woman every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday night. And trying to study in heels. It was painful.”

As it turned out, both courses of study would serve him well. “A producer of reality television is really a kind of an en-



ertainment engineer,” who’s constantly solving real-world problems, he said. After graduating, Cronin actually pursued a more traditional engineering career, because he wanted a “real” job and figured that all his classmates heading to New York City to work as actors would starve. “And I was pretty much right,” he added. But he also started writing jokes for a friend producing a TV news spoof, who paid \$100 per joke. “I’d write them on my way to work as an engineer,” he said, and when he was making as much from the jokes as from his “real” career he realized it might be time to reconsider.

Crooked career paths were a theme among the panel participants. Simms recently did a stint on *Project Runway*. But when she arrived at Penn, “I thought I was going to law school,” she said. Then she considered transferring to Wharton, detoured through creative writing, and even considered communications. Mostly, she said, “I wanted to live in New York.” A trip to study abroad in Paris inspired her to apply to art school, and after picking up her MFA she finally swerved into the fashion world.

For his part, Goldman is now a successful producer, but he actually spent a year in med school before dropping out. “I looked around, and everyone else was excited to be there,” he said, but the experience left him cold. “The creative wheels weren’t turning,” and he realized it was time to decide whether he wanted to “just keep going through the motions, and make my parents very happy,” or strike out and try to find something he loved.

All the talk of passion forced a confession from Charlie Herschel. “I did *not* follow my passion, and I *am* a lawyer,” he said. But while at Penn he also developed an obsession with *Survivor*, the grandfather of reality competition shows. He and his roommates would dress up to watch it every Thursday night, and 17 seasons later he summoned the courage to audition. He didn’t win *Survivor: Gabon—Earth’s Last Eden*, but “I had my seven weeks of glory,” he said [“Alumni Profiles,” Nov/Dec 2008].

Auditioning “is a grueling process” that lasts about six months, said Herschel. “And they’re constantly saying, ‘You’re in, you’re out’ ... and you have no control over it.” He sat through two days of psychological testing, and since it’s not clear what personalities the producers are looking for, “there are no right answers.”

From her time on *Project Runway*, Simms had a similar take. “You just have to be yourself,” she said. “If it’s fake they can see right through that.” Her audition video featured a sped-up montage of her trying on every stitch of clothing she’d ever made. “And I had my dog in the video,” she said. The editing took longer than she expected, so she ended up spending \$50 to FedEx it on the last possible day.

Cronin, meanwhile, has dealt with the casting problem from the other side of the table, for shows like *Flavor of Love* and *Bridalplasty*. “I’ve had to cast everything from trying to find a group of women who are interested in dating Flavor Flav—it wasn’t as hard as you’d think—to brides-to-be who are willing to let us determine their wedding date.

And who wanted plastic surgery procedures, but weren’t so hideously ugly that you couldn’t watch them on television. So that’s a very fine line.”

In a ratings-driven world, casting is all about the ability to hold the audience’s attention. “If you’re someone who has a rich inner life, you’re not really good for TV,” Cronin said. “You need to ‘pop’ on camera. But that’s a very subjective question.” If you notice your eyes drifting while watching an audition, he said, that person probably won’t make the cut. A good producer can sniff out mass appeal from a stack of casting tapes like a dowser sensing water.

Once selected, Simms said, she wasn’t allowed to speak to any other cast members of *Project Runway* off camera. And though enough outspoken personalities will naturally generate conflict, Simms describes how the producers can ratchet up the pressure even further. When *Project Runway* aired, the show gave the impression that contestants had five hours to complete the first challenge. In fact, “it was really only three and a half,” she said. “And it became more stressful than they portrayed.”

Cronin is the first to admit that reality TV producers freely manipulate their subjects. “We’ll use tricks,” he said. A wily contestant in the interview chair might say, “You’re *not* going to get me to say that I hate Kristin.” But, he said, “With a simple edit, we make that ‘I hate Kristin.’ And the truth is, they hate Kristin. They just didn’t want to say it on TV.”

“We don’t do journalism, but we do tell the generally true story of what happened,” Cronin said. He added that narratives techniques like compression and juxtaposition are as old as storytelling itself. Goldman had another take on the value reality shows have to offer. “There are a lot of scripted shows that are very formulaic,” he said, and far too many “comedies with three laughs per page.” But most often people go on reality shows “because they’re at a point of transition, and things are changing in their lives. It’s very relatable, and it’s extremely emotional.

“And when you have one of those moments that’s happening in real life, and you’re documenting it,” he said, “there’s something that is always fascinating.” ♦ —Sean Whiteman LPS’11